

Homily 2021.02.07 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Job is in lockdown.

Did you hear something of yourself in his lament, his weird disturbed nights, his fretful days, his strange experience of time, where individual days crawl by, yet life itself seems to be flashing past like a weaver's shuttle?

The book of Job is an extended reflection on the big 'Why?' question. As disaster comes upon him and his life is dismantled around him, Job makes his famous declaration 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I shall return. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken back. Blessed be the name of the Lord!' (*Job 1:21*) After saying this he falls silent.

Eventually, Job breaks his silence in the way we hear in today's first reading. And later on towards the end of the book, the Lord gives His answer to Job. And just as Job's lament speaks to us today, so does the Lord's answer speak to us today. Get the picture right. The Lord is our maker, we are His creatures; any existence we have is His gift, not ours by rights. The Lord's answer is recommended reading and meditation for our times and you'll find it in Job chapters 38 and 39.

You can interpret the book of Job as a warning not to ask the 'Why?' question at all; to see it as 'putting the Lord your God to the test' which is forbidden. However, the Lord does not destroy Job for his questions. Rather, He likes him, calls him His servant, and in the end restores him. So for me, the book of Job says: ask the 'Why?' question if you want, have it out with God, wrestle with the Divine, don't hide your anger and resentment from Him since He knows it anyway, let Him have it with both barrels. But know this, O man: ***you will lose the argument.*** But know this too: ***you will learn much and grow by having and losing the argument.***

The healing miracles that accompany the ministry of Jesus are a demonstration of his power, and ultimately of His divinity. The Lord restores the fortunes of Job; Jesus restores the fortunes of those He heals. And our prayer is that we too may be restored by Divine Grace, so that both as individuals and together, we may live to the full the life our Creator gave us, in this life, and in the life to come.